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ABSTRACT

One composition instructor's purpose is to address, or perhaps, re-dress, the balance of the relationship between teacher and student using a dialogic framework that provides for reciprocity. Her aim is to provoke, to seduce (persuade through passion), and to awaken their incipient sense of wonder at the world and the language that creates this reality. Bakhtin classifies the Socratic dialogue as "carnivalesque." Reading Plato's dialogue in "Phaedrus"against David Mamet's "Oleanna," and by using it as a site for inquiry rather than as an object of "truth" or received knowledge, students are led to question not just the ancient model of education, but all models of education--including higher learning as an institution--its purpose, methods, prejudices--as well as models of teacher-student relationships. Read both together and against each other, these plays reveal significant common themes. Both involve two characters, a student and a teacher. Both "play" with this relationship and explore questions of power and justice. Excerpts from students' writings on the plays show that many of them discovered new perspectives about themselves and the world, but some remained uncomfortable with a power rearrangement. During discussions about "Oleanna" the students almost unanimously supported John, the teacher, and had virtually no sympathy for Carol, the student. (Student response statistics, handouts and assignments, background materials on readings, and in-class writing projects are attached.) (NKA)

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CCCC Convention, Phoenix, AZ

12 March 1997

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

When Phaedrus Meets Oleanna: Teaching Composition as Social Justice, or Reconsidering Power (Im)Balances between Students and Teachers

I must confess that my goal in teaching my composition courses is NOT "to empower my students." Carol, the student in David Mamet's play Oleanna, angrily accuses her professor of just the reverse: "What gives you the right? . . . You feel yourself empowered . . . you say so yourself" (51). She certainly sees empowerment as a negative characteristic. For me, to "be empowered" is a passive construction that has two implications. First, it seems to suggest that students aren't inititating or interacting in the process. Second, it does not indicate from where the power originates. For where does the power I am supposed to be giving them come from? Me? The very word "empower" indicates that I already possess power and it's a mere matter of bestowing it upon my students. It also assumes that as I lose power or authority, my students gain it. I'm not convinced this is the case. And, in turn, it presupposes they want to assume my authority. I'm not so sure they do.

Act 1-- Try-outs Backstage: Thinking Before Acting

Instead, what I wish is to do is address, or perhaps re-dress, the balance of this relationship using a dialogic framework that provides for reciprocity. For my students, I aim to provoke (from the Latin meaning "to challenge or cause to take action"), to seduce (to persuade through passion), and finally, to awaken their incipient sense of wonder at the world and the language that creates this

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reality. From my students, I ask to be provoked, to be seduced, and to find wonder in their original ideas and perspectives.

In a just relationship, power flows evenly back and forth, in flux. It is shared between both, rather than belonging to one or the other. In this way it is both balanced (just), and social--created and maintained by the class rather than one individual. Furthermore, when power is equal, the distinction of teacher and student begins to dissolve, and in many ways to become inter-changeable. Or at least, this is what some of my students strongly believe--and it is a belief I share, and foster, with them.

What our task becomes then, is to play with power throughout the course. "Play" in both the sense of genre and engagement. Playing is acting, doing, experimenting--it allows students to interact with each other, with the texts, and with the teacher in new and different ways--creating as they go rather than following directions. Dramas, as forms of literary expression, always suggest players and audiences. So students can be both participants and observers. Plays are open to interpretation by the writer, readers, performers and director. They may also be provocative and seductive--ambiguous and dialogic. The two works I put into play are David Mamet's Oleanna and Plato's Phaedrus.

Bakhtin classifies the Socratic dialogue as "carnivalesque." He writes: "This carnival sense of the world possesses a mighty life-creating and transforming power, an indestructible vitality" (107). Bakhtin identifies the basis for the Socratic dialogue as "dialogic," or by which "the means of seeking truth is counterposed to official monologism, which pretends to possess a ready-made truth . . . Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (110). So here is another connection to social justice. By reading Plato's dialogue against Mamet's play, and by

using it as a site for inquiry rather than as an object of "truth" or received knowledge, students are led to question not just the Ancient model of education, but all models of education--including higher learning as an institution--its purpose, methods, prejudices--as well as models of teacher-student relationships. I particularly emphasize how they themselves create, rather than merely participate in, these relationships. They are now invited to play with the play--and try out whichever role they want.

I use this theoretical basis as the focus of my composition course. Read together--and against each other--these plays reveal significant common themes. Both dialogues involve two characters--a student, and a teacher. Both "play" with this relationship and explore questions of power and justice. Socrates reveals his ultimate goal is seduction, while John professes to his student Carol, "that's my job, don't you know . . . To provoke you" (32). Both share the threat of violence. Phaedrus jokingly tells his mentor: "We are alone and I am younger and stronger than you, so mark my words and don't compel me to use force to get what you may as well supply without reluctance" (34). Carol's power is verbal, rather than physical. Her written report and oral testimony deprive John of his tenure, although at the end of the play, he resorts to physical force. Both works end with uncertainty over who exactly has more power--student or teacher.

During a crucial scene in Oleanna, John says, "What's important is that I awake your interest, if I can, and that I answer your questions" (26). While I share his desire to awaken interest in individual students, I propose not to answer students' questions but to prompt them into generating more. I hope to show them that every question leads to more questions rather than one "right" answer or solution. In a chapter of her book Between Past and Future, philosopher and essayist Hannah Arendt proposes a new way of seeing teaching. For her, "the function of [education] is to teach . . . what the world is like and not to instruct . . . in the art of living. Since the world is old,

always older than [students] themselves, learning inevitably turns toward the past, no matter how much living will spend itself in the present" (195). In this way, it is important to give students that backward glance toward the origins of rhetoric and education, so that they can more fully understand and advance their current position as students in higher learning. Arent also cautions that education, while still retaining an authority based in tradition, must nevertheless not "strike from [students'] hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world" (196). In this model, students create while teachers encourage and refrain from interferring--rather like a director who gives the actors context and space to act within it.

Act 2--My Students' (Re)Actions

Of course, taking the play from script to dress rehearsal--from ideas to actions--is always a risky venture. As a sample of my students own responses to the course will show. Overall, I was moved and thrilled by the papers students wrote and their comments on evaluations about how they discovered new perspectives about themselves and the world. While I do have excerpts from these papers, where students thoughtfully and successfully stepped into the play and carved out their roles, the examples I want to focus on here, for our purposes of discussion, are those that didn't accept the invitation, that didn't put themselves into play.

In their eyes, the best teachers were those who bonded with their students. In other words, they didn't see the relationship as one that reversed or balanced out, but rather dissolved and joined. The teacher as student and the student as teacher. They saw the relationship as roles that could be exchanged, adopted, and interpretted by individuals, since they were mutual. Even so, the proposed bond many of them described in their position papers raises several enigmatic issues. Enigmatic because in many examples, rather than questioning or critiquing the aspects of power in

the relationship, or how a bond may disseminate the power, they had a tendency to glorify the role of teacher. So the bond retained a sense of hierarchy or at least superiority.

For example, analyzing a scene in *Oleanna*, one student wrote: "In the ideal teacher student relationship, Carol would own up to her problems and allow John to help her. In return, John would teach Carol, and they would both learn from each other. . . . Thinking about the 'ideal' teacher/student relationship is to get close to, and form a bond with the student. Let the student know someone cares, and encourage him." This response is ambiguous on several levels. The writer's views are stated in a direct fashion and then fade almost entirely away. The writer begins by putting Carol, the student, in a passive role, "allowing John to help her." A bond is emphasized, yet it is not interactive. Then the voice changes from third person to a sentence completely lacking an agent, and again to the imperative second person. Moreover, the final "him" seems strangely out of place, since the example began by naming a female student.

Another student wrote, "Considering Socrates' thought, there must be bondage, in order to be a good teacher." Bondage? Hmmm--No, upon closer reading, this student really isn't suggesting a new way to interpret seduction as an element of learning. Like the first example, this writer's idea is equivocal because it is stated in the passive voice. Despite my own emphasis in class on interaction and mutuality, when students try to express their own ideas, they remain uncomfortable with this power rearrangment. So many end up making either an oblique challenge to the traditional roles, or none at all.

One reason may be that a majority of my students are first- or second-generation Americans, and are the first in their families to attend college. Or it could be that they resist a new view of teacher-student relationships that puts more responsibility on them because they work part-time or full-time and see college as their means to better paying jobs. This resistance and these deep-seated

attitudes about teachers were revealed during our discussions on *Oleanna* in the students' almost unanimous support for John--the teacher--and virtually no sympathy for Carol--the student. No matter what evidence I brought to light for them to reconsider, they sided with John. When I asked them to pretend they were in the same class with Carol, to take into account her entire story including the violence that occurs at the finale, and to write a letter to the Tenure Committee, only two students voluntarily chose to argue in Carol's defense. The others not only thought John had been wronged, but they wrote that "he has been the best professor I've had at this university." While the text IS ambiguous, there is nothing specifically based in the text that supports this superlative praise. In a paper arguing that Socrates and Phaedrus would think John was a good teacher, another student wrote, "Plato saw his idealistic, persuasive, and wise teacher, Socrates, develope the idea of a good teacher having to be a man with dignity, aspiration, and self-respect. All these fine characteristics are automatically inflected on the person seeking or holding such a position." To borrow John's own words, "What can that mean?" (16). What the statement suggests is a Ciceronian ideal rhetor: the good man speaking well. But can this still apply in the land of Oleanna? This view seems to remove choice, and certainly doesn't allow for a teacher to develop or honestly respond to students. (Nor does it seem to allow for a woman in either role.)

So this leaves many new questions, which I hope we may put into play in our discussion. They are:

- What can we do when we invite students to play with constructing power, but they would prefer not to?
- What if our views of a balanced teacher/student relationship conflict with their cultural or personal beliefs and attitudes toward these roles?

- When we aim to question power and authority, how does resistance fit into this model?

And finally,

- Is it just to impose our attitudes, no matter how they might favor the student, or insist students question a myth that's deeply held?
- Is it just not to challenge students to re-evaluate their positions and their choices?

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Statistics from My Students' Responses

Subjects for their Position Papers (Total = 40) [Students explicitly mentioning power 6]

Student-Teacher Relationships	15
Need to Eliminate Grades	13
Need to Keep Grades	05
College Is Not Creative	04
College Is Creative	01

Sources Cited In their Papers (Total students = 40)

Mamet	30
Plato	20
Pirsig	18
Higher Learning	14
Rodriguez	11
Paper Chase	08
personal experience	08
Langston Hughes	05
Surviving Desire	05
Oleanna (film)	04
Educating Rita	04
hooks	03
Burmester	03
Others	04

(total sources = 137)

Their Rankings of Texts (Mid)

Best	Worst
Mamet (20)	Mamet (5)
Plato (10)	Plato (5)
(Final)	
Mamet (27)	Mamet (6)
Plato (18)	Plato (10)

Grade Distribution for Position Papers

A = 16	A = 23
A- = 07	
B+ = 04	
B = 07	B = 14
B- = 03	
C+ = 01	
C = 02	C = 03
C- = 0	
D = 0	

Their Grades for My Teaching

(=34) Midterm	Final (=31)
A+ = 6	A+ = 6
A = 19	A = 20
A- = 3	A- = 1
B+ = 4	B+ = 1
B = 1	B = 2
B- = 1	B- =
C+ =	C+ =
C =	C = 1

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Most Memorable Experience in Course	(Total = 30)
Participating in class' own Tenure Committee Hearing	7
Outdoor discussion of *Phaedrus*	5
Writing film review/analyzing film clips in class	5
SCAILAB	4
Peer Workshops	2

Others:

- "Reading *Oleanna* and throwing it against the wall because it was evil."
- "The free atmosphere during class, in writing and discussion."
- "It was when I realized that I should be learning for myself."
- "The first day of class--I was shocked to see a young woman! All my life the majority of my English teachers were pretty old and mostly men."

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When Phaedrus Meets Oleanna: Teaching Composition as Social Justice, or Reconsidering Power (Im)Balances Between Students and Teachers

CONTENTS--STUDENT HANDOUTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- Plato's *Phaedrus*--Response Papers and Discussion Questions
- Mamet's *Oleanna*--Response Papers and Discussion Questions
- *Oleanna*: The Film--Some Observations and Discussion Questions
- *Oleanna*: Tenure Committee Hearing (2)
- In-Class Writing #2--(Mamet) Letter to Tenure Committee, Lawyers
- Models of Education: Comparing *Phaedrus* and *Oleanna*
- In-Class Writing #3--(Plato and Mamet) Would Socrates and Phaedrus think John was a good teacher? Why or why not?
- SCAILAB (Computer Classroom) Discussion Questions on Films Portraying College
- More Discussion Questions about College Films
- Writing Project #2--Film Review: Analyzing the Portrayal of College Education in Pop Culture
- Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*--Response Papers and Discussion Questions
- Writing Project #3--Position Paper on Your Philosophy of Education: Creativity in College, Teacher-Student Relationships, or The Role of Grades

[Taught in English 160—Composition I: The Rhetoric of Education—Fall Semester 1996; & English 160—Composition I: Rhetoric, Dialogue, and Education—Fall Semester 1995]

PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

RESPONSE PAPERS

Response Paper #5-- Why do you think Plato chooses love for the topic of the three speeches (Lysias's and the two by Socrates)? How do you think love (or desire) relates to learning and rhetoric?

Response Paper #6-- Describe the relationship between Phaedrus and Socrates, and how this relates to learning. In what ways is *Phaedrus* "about" **education**? Explain how Plato uses the dialogue to establish his own ideas of education in his culture.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS YOU READ

- How does the setting influence the content and action in the dialogue?
- How is Socrates's first speech different from Lysias's? How is Socrates's second speech different? Why is Socrates's second speech better than the other two speeches?
- If you had to pick one word to describe what Plato's *Phaedrus* is about, which would you choose: creativity, community, desire, love, power, reality, rhetoric, the soul, or writing? Explain your choice and give some examples from the text.
- Do you agree with Socrates that you must "know thyself" before you can consider learning?
- Do you agree with Socrates (and Plato) that "the function of speech [and writing] is to influence the soul"? Is this possible in today's society? In what ways? Is this still a desirable fuction in today's society? Why or why not?
- What is the purpose of Plato's dialogue? Why do you think he wrote it?
- Does Plato use rhetorical appeals? Why or why not? If you think he does, which ones are used (give examples from the text)?
- What are some of the metaphors that Plato uses metaphors in his dialogue? What is the effect of these metaphors?
- Why does Plato use a myth? How does this myth relate to the rest of the dialogue?
- How does the structure of the dialogue contribute to its content?
- What are the guidelines that Socrates' recommends for a "good speech"?
- Why is Plato so opposed to writing? Do you agree or disagree that speech is superior to writing?

IN-CLASS WRITING #1

Exigence
You, as a college student at UIC, have been invited to give a speech to persuade high school seniors why they should consider going to college after they graduate. The question you have been asked to address is: "What is the purpose of a college education?"

Audience
High school seniors, their parents, and their teachers. (Use formal, rather than casual diction and language.)

Constraints
Use Socrates' guidelines for rhetoric to write a speech that will persuade your readers that your viewpoint is indeed the best (and remember that your purpose in delivering the speech is also to "improve their souls"--so you are interested in what is best for the audience). Look at pages 77-83, where Socrates and Phaedrus discuss rhetoric, particularly the elements of a good speech (this is also summarized on page 100). Your thesis statement must state your position. For your definition, you may choose "college" or "education" (as separate terms), or as one "college education." Consider one argument that your opposition might pose to your selected position, and show how it can be ruled out (for your refutation and confirmation, just before your conclusion).

Rhetorical Appeals
You may use any or all of the appeals. For example, for ethos you might include some personal experience, for pathos you may end your paper with a call to action or refer to the audience in some way. However, the majority of your appeals for this paper need to be logos. You *may* refer to quotations out of *Phaedrus*, as suits your argument, but this is not a requirement.

Revision: You may revise this essay for a re-grade. If you choose to do so, expand it to 3 pages, typed (following MLA format) and hand it in along with your first in-class essay with my comments, and any revising notes or marked drafts.

[Keep this handout! Just turn in your handwritten paper.]

DAVID MAMET'S *OLEANNA*

RESPONSE PAPERS

Response Paper #7--What are the appeals to *pathos* that David Mamet is using in his play? (Refer to specific examples in the text.) What is your reaction to the play? Which character do you find most sympathetic? Why? Some critics have suggested the play is not as open-ended or ambiguous as it might seem. Do you agree or disagree with this view?

Response Paper #8--How does the direction and setting in the film influence how you interpret the action and character's motives? What kinds of changes did you notice between the film and the text? Did the movie make you change your opinion of the characters? Why or why not? Which version did you prefer--the written text or the film? Why?

Response Paper #9--While *Oleanna* is clearly "about" sexual harassment, what other key words would you use to describe this play? (For example, power, knowledge, censorship, education, "rights," language, justice.) Give examples from the text to support your choices. How do each of these terms help you see the play from a different perspective?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS YOU READ

- What is missing from the play? What do we as the audience *not* know or see?
- Clifford Bishop, a British film critic, wrote about *Oleanna* that "it has the trappings of classical tragedy, where language itself is the odyssey, the weapons, and the mystery" (*Theatre Record,* 23 Sept 1993, page 1066). What do you think about this comment? Do you think *Oleanna* is a tragedy? Do the characters have "tragic flaws"? Why or why not? (Think about tragedies you have read by Shakespeare or Sophocles)
- What is Carol's view of education? (see pages 10-12, 14, 26, 34-36, 48-49, 66-67, 69)
- What is John's view of education? (see pages 17, 26, 28, 32-33, 35, 54-55)
- Would you say John's questioning of Carol follows "the Socratic method" (based on what you have read of Socrates in *Phaedrus* and from the film clip, *The Paper Chase*)? Why or why not?
- How would you define the "understanding" that Carol seeks (page 71)?
- Do you think that "everyone" has a "right" to higher education (pages 30, 32-33)? Why or why not?
- Do you believe that "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion"? Does this apply to all situations or do you think there are exceptions? Explain your views.
- How many different ways is the word "right" used in this play? Describe some of these contexts.
- Would you say that *Oleanna* defends freedom of speech or advances censorship? Why?
- Do you think "knowledge is power"? Why or why not? What counts as power in this play? (see pages 64-65, 68).
- According to Leonard Ashley, in his book, *What's in a Name*, *John* is a Hebrew name meaning "God is gracious" (6); and *Carol* is the feminization of the Germanic name Carl, which means "man" (8). How might these meanings influence how we perceive these characters?

OLEANNA: THE FILM

One change between the play and the film is the addition of "interludes" between the acts where we see the characters outside the setting of a professor's office. We see first Carol's sparse dorm room, a stack of books on her desk, and after Act I, we see John's "new house," a huge, mansion-like place that is obviously a sign of "upward mobility." Between Acts 2 and 3, we see John, disheveled and distraught, in a hotel room, smoking and drinking. Carol, meanwhile is in a copyshop photocopying a flyer and then placing an order for a poster. These documents are flashed too quickly for the viewer to really study--but what they say is significant--and certainly seems to impose more of the author's perspective toward interpreting the play, so I wanted to give you the texts.

The Flyer (upside down on the photocopy machine)
For sexual misconduct
and for injustice to students and the student body
I have come to apologize
and I see that I have failed
in my responsibilities to the young.

The Poster (hung up in a classroom)
It is the right of all students
to be treated with respect
and dignity. This right does not need to be "learned,"
or "deserved." It is their inalienable right as citizens
and human beings. It is not incumbent upon the
student to treat Professors, Administrators, and college
personnel with deference. The simple civility owed to
every woman and man is sufficient. These concepts
devolve not out of the desire to coerce or to revolutionize
but merely to reform that which for a long while
has stood in need of reformation.

- What do you think about the tone of these two pieces of rhetoric?
- What do you notice about the diction and style? What are the "key words"?
- What appeals are being used in the "manifesto" on the poster? Do you find it persuasive? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Is the first document meant for John to sign, or to publicly deliver? Did John indeed "fail" in his responsibilities?
- In regard to the poster, and in John's words, "What can that mean?" (page 8)--what is the message here? Did Carol write this manifesto, or do you think it is the product of her "group"?
- Do you think these two pieces add depth to the interpretation of the film? How? (or do you think they are unnecessary or obvious? why?)

OLEANNA: TENURE COMMITTEE HEARING

While we, as readers, witness what happens between John and Carol, we don't know what happens at the meeting of the tenure committee when Carol presents her case (Between Acts Two and Three). Although we find out that the outcome supports Carol's side, we aren't sure what actually persuaded the committee to find John guilty. In class, we will create our own hearing and give John a "second chance," since anyone is innocent until proven guilty. Each of you will play a role in the proceedings, and at the end of class we will vote to determine John's future.

The Roles

Carol
John
Tenure Committee (5 members, 1 of whom is a woman)
Carol's Group (3 members)
John's Colleagues (3 other professors in the department)
Student Representatives (3 supporting John as a good teacher; 3 supporting Carol's allegations)
Arbitrator (neutral person)
Ombudsperson (student advocate)
Department Chair (faculty advocate)

The Proceedings

Arbitrator will call the meeting to order and get it started.
Carol will state her side of the story to the Tenure Committee.
John will state his side of the story to the Tenure Committee.
Each member of the Tenure Committee will ask Carol and John one question about their version of events.
All advocates for John will speak on his behalf, to show that he should keep his job.
All advocates for Carol will support her case and ask for John's dismissal.
The tenure committee may question any of these supporters.
The arbitrator will sum up the information, representing both sides, at the close.
The Tenure Committee will vote; everyone will vote.

To Prepare

Think about which role you wish to participate in, and then form an opinion about which side you select to support (or why you wish to remain neutral). List examples or evidence to support your position and that you will use to address the Tenure Committee; or that as a member of the Tenure Committee you would find of particular importance.

After you have chosen your role, pick a partner and find some specific examples that would support your viewpoint. Also think of reasons to support Carol (since most of you currently favor John's side). This will help you expand your views of her position to broaden your own perspective of the play. Examining the opposite side will also help you address what the opposition might raise, so you can prepare further proof to support your own points.

You are welcome to talk to classmates outside of class and to plan speeches together. You may refer to anything mentioned in the text, the film, or the reviews to support your views. You may also wish to refer to your response papers, class discussion, or our InterChanges discussion. Bring all your notes and text to class on the day of the hearing.

OLEANNA: TENURE COMMITTEE HEARING

Purpose: By creating the hearing, we will be practicing rhetoric (using appeals to persuade an audience--the committe--of a particular position in a probable--not knowable--situation). This hearing gives us a chance to create knowledge together--a scene and argument which didn't exist before. Fill out this chart as the hearing progresses. This will help you weigh the evidence for voting at the end of the hour, and will give you notes for our in-class writing.

The Roles	The Main Support (Evidence, Reasons, Pathos)
Carol	
John	
Carol's Group 1. 2. 3.	
John's colleagues 1. 2. 3.	
Students in favor of John 1. 2. 3.	
Students in favor of Carol 1. 2. 3.	
Omsbudsperson (student advocate)	
Dept. Chair (John's advocate)	

Additional Notes/Comments:

Who did you cast your vote for? Why?

IN-CLASS WRITING #2

Exigence
Following the tenure committee meeting and John's actions in the third act, the university administration and John's lawyers have decided to poll John's students to get a clearer idea of what he is like as a teacher. You are an undergraduate student taking the same class as Carol. Write a letter persuading this task force to either fire him from his position because of Carol's allegations and his actions or to dismiss the case against the Professor.

Audience
The faculty members of the Tenure Committee (one of whom is a woman, page 51); university administration (the Dean of the College and the Chair of the Education department) and lawyers representing the university's best interests.

Constraints
- Use formal diction.
- Since you were not in the room with John and Carol, you cannot refer to events or dialogue that only the two of them would know--but refer to their general beliefs, attitudes, philosophy of education, etc., as they are revealed in the text or portrayed in the film. Use examples from your own analysis of the text, film, and our class discussions.
- Use the first-person to present your position and examples--which should be specific. You may draw on your (imagined) observations of John (as a student in his class--for example, how does he treat you, and how have you witnessed him treating other students in class, have you had him for other classes too, have you ever visited his office hours, etc., which of his actions have you seen) and of Carol (what has she told you about John, what have other students told you about John, are you friends with Carol, do you come from the same home town, high school, dorm, etc., what have you observed about her behavior in class, how you are doing in the class, what you think of his book, etc.).
- Include a refutation/confirmation just before your conclusion (considering one point the other side might object to in your argument, and why this is a weak point compared to your position).

Revision: You may revise this essay for a re-grade. If you choose to do so, expand it to 3 pages, typed (following MLA format) and hand it in along with your handwritten, in-class essay with my comments, and any revising notes or marked drafts.

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING PHAEDRUS AND OLEANNA

Purpose
The goal of comparing Plato's *Phaedrus* to Mamet's *Oleanna* is to demonstrate how similar the approaches to education are, as well as well much they have changed from the Greek "ideal" set forth by Socrates, and the Greek Sophists before him. By having this basis, you will be able to more fully explore the ideas of education and teacher/student relationships in the contemporary films about higher education, and in the remaining texts in this course. And, hopefully, to apply it to your own education as you make choices in college. Many of these quotes came up in our discussion last week.

Ancient Greek Education
Greek culture supported the belief that the mind, body, and soul must be "exercised" together. The subjects for higher learning were: grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, history, science (astronomy), literature (poetry), and gymnastics.

PHAEDRUS

Socrates' thoughts on education

- "I've not yet succeeded in obeying the Delphic injunction to 'know myself' and it seems to me absurd to consider problems about other beings while I am still in ignorance about my own nature" (25).
- "The soul that has seen the most enters into a human infant who is destined to become a seeker after wisdom or beauty or a follower of the Muses and a lover; . . . the eighth a popular teacher; the ninth a tyrant . . . In all this the lot which befalls a man between two incarnations corresponds to the goodness or badness of his previous life" (55).
- "If you mean the power to become a finished performer, Phaedrus, it seems likely--indeed, inevitable--that what is true of everything else holds good here also. If you have a natural gift for speaking you will become a famous speaker, provided that you improve your gift by knowledge and practice" (88).
- "The function of speech is to influence the soul" (see 91-92).
- ". . . when a man employs the art of dialectic, and, fastening upon a suitable soul, plants and sows in it truths accompanied by knowledge. Such truths can defend themselves as well as the man who planted them; they are not sterile, but contain a seed from which fresh truths spring up in other minds; in this way they secure immortality for it, and confer upon the man who possesses it the highest happiness which it is possible for a human being to enjoy" (99).

Phaedrus's thoughts on education

- he wants to practice a speech by an orator he admires on his mentor, the first is an example of imitation, and the second is delivery, but he also wants feedback from Socrates on how well he does (23).
- threatens (jokes about) using force (or violence) to get his teacher to do what he wants him to (34); he feels comfortable disagreeing with his mentor.
- "Offer it to me, too, Socrates; friends should share everything" (103).

DAVID MAMET'S OLEANNA

Contemporary American Education

We'll be exploring these aims in the remainder of the course, particularly through *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig, reading selections from *Hunger of Memory* by Richard Rodriguez, *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks, and "Theme for English B," by Langston Hughes, and the films: *Educating Rita, Higher Learning, The Paper Chase*, and *Surviving Desire*.

John's thoughts on education

- (why he's helping her) "Because I like you" (20-21, 27).
- "I'm going to say that it was not you, it was I who was not paying attention. We'll start the whole course over. Your grade is an A" (25).
- "What is the class, but you and me?" (26).
- "What's important is that I awake your interest, if I can, and that I answer your questions" (26).
- "We shove this book at you, we say, read it. Now, you say you've read it? I think that you are *lying*. I'll *grill* you, and when I find you've lied, you'll be disgraced, and your life will be ruined. It's a sick game. Why do we do it? Does it educate? It is something-other-than useful" (28).
- ". . . that's my job, don't you know . . . to provoke you" (32).
- "Somebody told you, and you hold it as an article of faith, that higher education is an unassailable good. This notion is so dear to you that when I question it, you become angry. Good. Good, I say. Are not those the very things which we should question? I say a college education, since the war, has become so matter of course, and such a fashionable necessity, for those either of or aspiring to the new vast middle class, that we espouse it, as a matter of right, and have ceased to ask, 'What is it good for'?" (32).
- " I do it because I love it" (35--see also page 43).
- "I feel that one point upon which I am unassailable is my unflinching concern for my students' dignity" (45).
- "Perhaps it's not your job to 'fix' me. I don't want to fix you. I would like to tell you what I think, because that is my job, conventional as it is, and flawed as I might be" (53).
- "I don't know that I can teach you about education. But I know that I can tell you what I *think* about education, and then *you* decide. And you don't have to fight with me. *I'm* not the subject" (53).

Carol's thoughts on education

- "I'm doing what I'm told. I bought your book, I read your . . ." (6,9)
- "It's *difficult* for me. I come from a different social . . . a different economic . . . does that mean nothing?" (8)
- "*Teach* me. *Teach* me" (11)
- "I want to know about my grade" (24)
- "You want unlimited power. To do and to say what you want. As it pleases you--Testing, Questioning, Flirting. . . " (66).
- "Here is a list of books which we find questionable . . . Someone chooses the books. If you can choose them, others can. . . You have an agenda, we have an agenda" (73-74).

IN-CLASS WRITING #3

Exigence
According to Plato's views of education, Would Socrates and Phaedrus consider Professor John, in David Mamet's play, *Oleanna*, a good teacher? Why or why not?

Audience
Your writing instructor

Constraints
- Compare and contrast the actions of the characters, and their theories of education as they are stated and revealed in the texts.
- Use the comparison/contrast arrangement model. (Don't forget to indicate where paragraphs begin and end.)
- Use *logos* to support your argument (quote or refer to specific examples from the text and your analysis/explanation of these). Avoid using second person (you) and first person for this paper.
- Use formal diction.
- You may use your notes or handouts from class discussions, as well as your books, and the *St. Martin's Handbook*.

Revision: You may revise this essay for a re-grade. If you choose to do so, expand it to 3 pages, typed (following MLA format) and hand it in along with your handwritten, in-class essay with my comments, and any revising notes or marked drafts.

SCAILAB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON FILMS

SURVIVING DESIRE

- How is writing portrayed and used in this film?
- Is Jude's search for understanding similar to that of Carol's in *Oleanna*? Explain.
- In *Oleanna*, knowledge was power. This film seems to be arguing that love is a form of knowledge. Is love also power? How do you see love/desire relating to learning in this film?
- Who is seducing who and why?
- Compare Sophia to Carol and Jude to John.
- What do you think is the significance to the names of the characters?
- Do you agree with Jude's comment that "Perhaps it's not as important to know the answers than as it is to ask the questions better"?

EDUCATING RITA

- What role does reading and writing play in this film?
- How does education change Susan's life?
- What is it that Frank wants for his student? What does she want for herself?
- How does Rita/Susan instruct Frank?
- Compare Rita/Susan to Carol and Phaedrus, and Frank to John (from *Oleanna*). How different is their relationship from that of John and Carol?
- Do you agree with Susan that if you want to change, "you have to do it from the inside"? (Is this like Socrates' advice to "know thyself"?)
- Do you agree with Frank's comment that "possessing a hungry mind is not in itself a guarantee of success"? Why or why not?
- How much does Rita have to sacrifice to become educated?

HIGHER LEARNING

- Fudge points out how the campus of Columbus University is like a "trip around the world," because each ethnic group has its own area, and don't seem to interact with each other. Is UIC like this, too? If you think so, in what ways? If you think it's not, what is it that you think prevents this?
- Which scene (or subplot) would you cut? What scene would you add? Describe.
- How is "struggle" a key word in this film?
- Which pairs of characters seem to instruct or mentor other characters?
- What kind of teacher is Prof. Phipps? What does he most want for his students?
- What is the role of desire in this film? How does it relate to learning?

PAPER CHASE

- What is Kingsfield's interpretation of the Socratic method? Would you say he's a good teacher?
- How is Hart's experience as a first year law student similar to yours as a first year undergraduate?
- What is the message here about the role of grades in higher learning?
- What is the relationship between Hart and Kingsfield?
- What is the role of desire in this film?
- What do you learn about writing (composing, researching, deadlines) from this film?

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT COLLEGE FILMS

- What rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos) are being used by the director/producer/writer in the film? Give some examples. Are these effective (do they persuade you to believe the "message" or theme of the film or to sympathize with the characters, or to believe the story is/could be "real")?
- Does this film have an exigence (addresses a gap or problem)? What is it? What do you think is the motivation behind the film--what is its purpose or why was it made?
- Who is the audience? What effect does the filmmaker want to have on this audience (what do they want the audience to think, feel, or do after viewing the film)?
- What is the style of the filmmaker? (what makes the film unique--location, camera angles, cinematography, characters, dialogue, plot, special effects, soundtrack, etc.)
- What metaphors are used in the film?
- What is the theme or message that you think the filmmaker wants to deliver?
- Do you agree or disagree with the message? Why?
- How are writing and reading represented and used in the film?
- Did you learn anything new from this film? Explain. Did it make you think about an issue or aspect of college education in a new or different way? How?
- What are the student/teacher relationships you observe? How do they differ from those in *Phaedrus* and *Oleanna*? For example, how has the role of "teacher" been expanded (peers teaching each other, other non-professors as teachers/mentors)? How has the role of "student" been expanded?
- How do the teachers instruct their students? What methods do they use? What philosophies do they seem to follow?
- What do the students teach to their teachers? How do the students instruct their teachers?
- Are any of the characters stereotyped? In what ways? How might these characters be made more believable?
- How does this film compare to other movies or television shows you have seen about college students and high school students?
- How does this film compare to your experience (and that of your friends) so far as a college student at UIC?
- Would you recommend this film to your friends? Why or why not?
- What influences from the Greek model of education do you see in the films? What changes from the Greek model do you notice?

WRITING PROJECT #2: FILM REVIEW

Analyzing the Portrayal of College Education in Pop Culture

PURPOSE

The goal of this assignment is to critically explore how popular films depict college students and teachers (inside and outside the classroom) and to analyze why film makers choose the perspectives they do. In addition, you will draw on your own experiences as a college student at UIC, and on the material we have covered in class so far. This assignment will give you an opportunity to write a paper that is not merely "academic," since film reviews are written by professional writers for newspapers and magazines. This assignment also gives you practice using the rhetorical strategies we have discussed because your ultimate goal is to persuade your reader of your view.

EXIGENCE

Your thesis will state your position on how the film portrays the relationships between students and teachers, and the public perception of education in college. You will also compare and contrast it to *Phaedrus* and *Oleanna*. You may choose to focus on one issue (such as the role of grades, experience, or books in learning) or address two or three, but you should have a focus, and your examples should support that focus. This is an analysis, not a summary or "report."

CONSTRAINTS

- You will write about <u>one</u> of the following films: *Educating Rita, Higher Learning, The Paper Chase*, or *Surviving Desire*.
- Refer to specific scenes to support your ideas and position.
- Include quotations and/or reference to passages in <u>both</u> Plato and Mamet.
- Use at least three figures of speech from the "Style" handout.
- Your primary appeal will be logos.
- <u>Paper length</u>: 3-5 pages, typed, following MLA format.

AUDIENCE

College students across America; the film editor of *The Flame* and UIC students

PIRSIG'S *ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE*

SOME BACKGROUND

The Narrator and Phaedrus are different personalities of the same man (who is not the author, but some version of him, too). Chris is the Narrator's son, who is about 11 years old. The Narrator is on vacation with his son, traveling from Minnesota to California on motocycle. They stop off in Bozeman, Montana, where Phaedrus used to teach rhetoric. Phaedrus also used to teach rhetoric at UIC. One of his main interests in teaching was a search for "Quality." This also guided his own education at the University of Chicago. The past tense is used in the narrative when referring to the Narrator's memories (and anything involving Phaedrus), while the present-tense is used for what happens on the trip with the Narrator and Chris.

RESPONSE PAPERS

Response Paper #11--Pirsig writes, "The whole idea of individual creativity and expression in the classroom was really basically opposed to the whole idea of the University" (180). Do you agree or disagree? Why? Also consider how this remark might be viewed by characters in the films *Oleanna, Higher Learning, The Paper Chase, Surviving Desire*, and *Educating Rita* (based on the film you watched and the clips we watched in class).

Response Paper #12--Would you want to have Phaedrus(Pirsig's personality) as a writing teacher? Why or why not? What could you learn from Phaedrus's teaching methods? What might you find frustrating about his teaching style? What did you like best and least about his theories of education?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS YOU READ (Chapters 13-16)

- What does Pirsig mean when he says in his Author's Note, that much has been changed "for rhetorical purposes"?
- The epigram just before Part I is from Plato's *Phaedrus*. How would you answer the question it poses?
- Look up "Chautauqua" in the Dictionary. How does that definition apply to the way Pirsig uses this term and idea in his book?
- What kinds of rhetorical appeals is Pirsig using (ethos, logos, pathos)?
- What are some of the parallels and similarities between this book and Plato's *Phaedrus*?
- On pages 131-2, Phaedrus says that "the real university has no location," that it is a "state of mind." What do you think of this?
- What do you think of Pirsig's definition and discussion of "Quality"? How do you define it?
- How does Pirsig use the metaphor of a mountain in this book? How does he use the metaphor of a journey?
- How does his discussion of grades (especially pages 135, 178-80) compare to that in Mamet's *Oleanna*?
- A brochure about Reed College (mentioned on page 180) says, "withholding grades aids Reed in attracting intellectually adventurous students while repelling the more routine types." What do you think of this remark?

WRITING PROJECT #3

Position Paper on Your Philosophy of Education

PURPOSE

For this persuasive paper, you will apply what you have learned from our readings and discussions of texts and films this semester to write an analysis synthesizing several texts. You will use your analysis to state and support your own position toward college education. This paper will allow you to reflect on everything we have studied and form your own ideas.

EXIGENCY

Choose one of the following:

1. How important are grades to a college education? (texts to analyze and critique: Plato [absence of grades], Mamet, Pirsig, Rodriguez, *The Paper Chase*)
2. Do you think universities and colleges oppose the idea of individual creativity and expression? Why or why not? If you think they do, in what ways? is this a necessary function of the university? Why or why not? What change would you propose to address this? (texts to analyze and critique: Mamet, Pirsig, Rodriguez, hooks, *Educating Rita, Higher Learning*)
3. In contemporary American colleges, what do you believe the ideal student/teacher relationship should be? Define your model and describe it. Critique the models we have studied in relation to your own model. (texts to analyze and critique: Lorch, Plato, Mamet, Pirsig, hooks, Hughes, *Educating Rita, Higher Learning, Paper Chase, Surviving Desire*)

CONSTRAINTS

- Choose at least three and no more than five sources to support your position. (At least two of your selected sources must be printed texts).
- You will make a "Works Cited" page, and use MLA documentation for your sources. (Refer *SMH*, pages 595-599.)
- You will be persuading your audience to accept your view, so make sure your thesis statement is clear and well supported.
- Use diction and style appropriate to an academic essay

Other Guidelines

1. Do **NOT** use the second-person (you) when writing this paper. You may refer to your ideas and experience in the first-person (but sparingly), and refer to the ideas of others using the third person.
2. You will want to use direct quotations and/or paraphrasing in order to introduce and acknowledge your outside sources. Explain the context and purpose of including each quotation.
3. Avoid using passive voice and sweeping generalizations; rather, support your statements with specific examples.

AUDIENCE

Your Instructor (who values original thought and descriptive examples)

PAPER LENGTH

3-5 pages